(b) whether it is a fact that Coast Guard has not held any such meetings between September 1, 2008 and January 31, 2009;

(c) the steps proposed to ensure that Coast Guard is accessible for meetings with fishermen; and

(d) the reasons for Coast Guard not calling mandatory consultative meetings with fishermen and small entrepreneurs in fishery sector?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) Coast Guard undertakes community interaction programme regularly by adopting fishing villages and provide basic safety training to the fishermen. The community interaction programme is instituted in every Coastal State and Union territory every quarter. The Coast Guard has carried out 43 community interaction meetings with the fishermen along the coast between 1st September, 2008 to 31st January, 2009. The community interaction programme being undertaken by Coast Guard is a voluntary effort. Coast Guard acts as an enforcement agency of the Government to check that deep sea fishing vessels comply with various requirements and conditions set by Ministry of Agriculture.

Talks with Somali pirates to free Indian hostages

†896. SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the relatives of Indian engineer and other personnel taken hostage by Somali pirates on 7th January, 2009, have requested Indian authorities to hold talks with the Somali Government for release of hostages; and

(b) if so, efforts made in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Induction of cadets from NCC pool into Indian armed forces

897. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has been actively considering to induct more cadets from the NCC pool into the officer cadres of the armed forces;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the strength of the NCC cadets would be increased and deployed at various important locations; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) The Government has already earmarked vacancies in officer cadres of the Armed Forces for induction of National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets who volunteer and meet the requisite standards.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) is today the world's largest uniformed youth organization with an authorized strength of 13 lakhs cadets. Exercise to increase authorized strength of NCC is taken up from time to time.

CAG's observation regarding functioning of OFBs

898. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the remedial measures taken by Government in view of the CAG observation that Ordnance Factory Boards (OFBs) manufacture of 23 mm ammunition for Silka and 30 mm guns mounted on Infantry Combat Vehicles was riddled with bad production planning, inefficient and uneconomic production of components and inadequate quality control;

(b) the reason for not improving performance of OFBs even after CAG's 2003 report which observed that an ordnance factory had provided defective tank ammunition worth Rs. 600 crores to army; and

(c) the punitive action taken against officials found responsible for sub standard tank ammunition and equipments?

THE MINISTRY OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) have created production capacity based on the requirement of Armed Forces. However, the annual requirement of stores fluctuates due to various reasons. While annual supply of 30 mm ammunition conformed to the requirement of the user, annual supply of 23 mm Schilka ammunition suffered disruptions on account of certain drawbacks in design. The design has been suitably modified by OFB and DGQA. The supply of the ammunition as per modified design has been planned from next financial year.

(b) The tank ammunition was produced as per approved technology and the supply was affected only after proof and acceptance by the designated agency. The indigenous technology of propellant was not available for 125 mm HE/HEAT ammunition and a decision was taken to use triple base propellant developed by DRDO. For 125 mm FSAPDS ammunition, a decision was taken to use Russian technology due to limited capacity of indigenous sources. Subsequently, quality problems were noticed in these ammunitions and a decision was taken in Ministry of Defence in consultation with all stakeholders to:—

(i) replace triple base propellant by single base propellant in 125 HE/HEAT Ammunition;

(ii) replace combustible cartridge case of Russian design with combustible cartridge case of DRDO technology in 125 FSAPDS ammunition.

(c) In view of above, the question does not arise.